

Approved For Release 25X1
2008/02/08 :
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100010

De

Approved For Release
2008/02/08 :
CIA-RDP85T00875R001100010

Secret



LOAN COPY
Return to DSM
HNL 107, Hq.

Developments in Indochina

APAC DIV
MAR 20 10 19 AM '73

25X1

Secret

25X1

24 April 1973

122

State Dept. review completed

Page Denied

Developments in Indochina

25X1

CONTENTS

24 April 1973

SOUTH VIETNAM 1

During the past several weeks, there has been increasing contact between North Vietnamese military officers and South Vietnamese Government and military personnel in southern Kontum Province.

25X1

25X1

In any event, the outlook for the ICCS and its ability to play an effective role in truce supervision remains gloomy. Recent reporting indicates that the North Vietnamese are repairing a number of small airfields in Communist-controlled territory in South Vietnam and Laos.

CAMBODIA. 5

Cambodia's new ruling body, the four-man "high political council," was formally established on 24 April. Given the history of political infighting, the four leaders clearly have their work cut out for them in trying to make the council an effective and cooperative enterprise.

25X1

25X1

a country-wide effort is probably under way among the Khmer Communists to rehabilitate Sihanouk's image politically.

LAOS 9

The government has drafted ambitious plans to combat Communist proselytizing efforts in rural areas, but its ability to organize such a program remains questionable.

ANNEX. 10

A North Vietnamese historical journal, essentially rewriting an early period of the Communist Party's history, seems to bolster Le Duan's position as somewhat "more equal" than his fellows in the generally collective Politburo.

SOUTH VIETNAMAccommodation in Kontum

Increasing contact has occurred between North Vietnamese military officers and South Vietnamese Army and Government personnel in southern Kontum Province over the past several weeks. The first contacts, were made in early April by radio between military commanders at North Vietnamese initiative. Personal meetings began on 13 April and have taken place along the major highway linking the provincial capitals of Pleiku and Kontum. The level of combat has diminished since the contacts got under way.

These face-to-face meetings between the commander of the North Vietnamese 95B Regiment, the deputy chief for security in Kontum Province, and a Ranger Group commander occurred almost daily. The South Vietnamese may have been encouraged by the release of some government troops along with their weapons. The Communists are now negotiating for free passage of their men across Route 14 to the east. Although the Communists claim that their men will be unarmed, the South Vietnamese have not yielded to the request. This territory was the scene of heavy fighting earlier this year, and the South Vietnamese will probably hesitate to cede any of it to the Communists.

The commander of the South Vietnamese 23rd Division and presumably the Kontum Province chief are aware of the high-level contacts. They probably do not know about, nor would they approve of, the many radio and direct contacts between low-level South Vietnamese officers and the Communists.

The Paris Agreement states that "The commanders of the opposing armed forces at those places of

24 April 1973

direct contact shall meet as soon as the cease-fire comes into force with a view to reaching an agreement on temporary measures to avert conflict...." Saigon has ordered that such meetings are to be restricted to the corps and division commanders; so far, there have been hardly any contacts at this level. Lower level contacts similar to those in Kontum are probably going on in other sectors of South Vietnam, but it is not known whether these have succeeded in curbing military activity.

25X1

The Future of ICCS

The outlook for the ICCS and its ability to play an effective role in truce supervision remains gloomy. Although Saigon is not blameless, the Communists have actively obstructed the commission and have shown little concern for repercussions, public or private, that could result from their non-cooperation. US demarches to the Hungarians and Poles, asking their cooperation, have so far done little more than prompt them to adopt slightly more sophisticated methods of hamstringing the ICCS.

25X1

24 April 1973

Page Denied

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

North Vietnamese Repairing Airfields

The North Vietnamese are repairing small airfields in Communist-controlled territory in South Vietnam and Laos.

25X1

a number of airfields, including Khe Sanh, Kham Duc, Dak To, and Loc Ninh in South Vietnam and Ban Nakay Neua, Khang Khay, and Tchepone in Laos, are being refurbished. In most instances, the repairs are relatively simple ones, such as the filling of bomb craters. The most extensive construction has been at Khe Sanh, where the Communists have established a radar site, built a new runway, and surrounded the base with an elaborate air defense network.

25X1

25X1

All of the airfields are located along major infiltration corridors or near large Communist troop formations, and air service would greatly facilitate the transfer of key personnel between Hanoi and subordinate units. Moreover, the North Vietnamese could use the airfields to deliver high priority cargo such as medicine and special weapons to their forces. They would probably claim such flights were by "civilian" aircraft and did not violate the cease-fire accords.

In recent months the North Vietnamese have rebuilt a number of airfields in southern North Vietnam, and transports are now flying scheduled runs

24 April 1973

25X1

between these bases and Hanoi. The Sam Neua airfield, refurbished by the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao last January, has been used by transport aircraft from Hanoi and Vientiane.

25X1

25X1

24 April 1973

CAMBODIABehind the High Political Council

Cambodia's new ruling body, the four-man "high political council," was formally established on 24 April. The council consists of prominent and familiar faces. In addition to its chairman, President Lon Nol, it includes Republican Party leader Sirik Matak, former first deputy prime minister In Tam, and former chief of state Cheng Heng. The reuniting of these men as the country's political elite symbolically turns the calendar back to 18 March 1970, when they presided over Sihanouk's deposition. Over the past two years, the relationships of Matak, In Tam, and Cheng Heng with Lon Nol have been seriously strained as the President became more isolated and less inclined to share any authority--except indirectly with his brother, Brigadier General Lon Non.

Matak's association with the President has been closest, both politically and personally. In the regime's first year, the two worked effectively together. Following Lon Nol's stroke in February 1971, their relationship began to deteriorate as the President increasingly refused to heed Matak's counsel or to delegate any real authority to him in his capacity as "prime minister delegate." Lon Nol's failure to curb his brother's incessant efforts to undercut Matak widened the rift. The relationship soured in March 1972, when Matak quit the government in a huff over Lon Nol's unwillingness to energetically defend him when he was under fire from the students in Phnom Penh.

In the intervening year, Lon Nol has tried to restore his relationship with Matak, repeatedly offering to make him vice-president. Matak's continuing

24 April 1973

insistence that he be granted significant authority and that Lon Nol be brought to heel, however, left the matter deadlocked. Relations between the two reached their lowest point last month, when Lon Nol persuaded the President to put Matak under house arrest for his alleged involvement in a mythical royalist plot to overthrow the government.

Lon Nol's relations with the popular and ebullient In Tam have at best been uneasy. The President's suspicions regarding his political ambitions led him to cashier In Tam as first deputy prime minister in September 1971. In Tam's subsequent assumption of the leadership of the Democratic Party and the relatively impressive showing he made against Lon Nol in last June's presidential election added to the political distance between the two men. Early this year, Lon Nol made a rather feeble bid to lure In Tam back into the government as a special adviser to the President, but his failure to define the dimensions of that position and to meet some of In Tam's conditions for acceptance killed the matter.

Cheng Heng for his part has had nothing to do with the President since last spring when Lon Nol forced his removal as chief of state and assumed that position. Cheng Heng has remained largely inactive in the past year, although he has from time to time tried to peddle a plan for negotiations with the Communists that would exclude both Lon Nol and Sihanouk.

With this history, the four leaders clearly have their work cut out for them in trying to make the council an effective and cooperative enterprise. Given Matak's, In Tam's and Cheng Heng's lack of organized political support and the clear need to maintain as much political unity as possible, these

24 April 1973

25X1

[redacted]

three men may be somewhat cautious in exercising their new-won authority. But in areas such as military reform, where the President has been dragging his feet, Lon Nol may find himself a minority of one. It is also likely that Matak--given his superior executive ability and political ambition--will seek to emerge as the council's driving force. How well Lon Nol can adjust to this radically changed situation is, of course, a major question. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Recycling Sihanouk

25X1

25X1

[redacted] When he arrived in Hanoi from Cambodia, Sihanouk contended that the Khmer Communists would be in the majority in any future government in Phnom Penh.) [redacted]

25X1

Sihanouk's trip was in effect a victory of the Chinese over the North Vietnamese and the Khmer Communist leaders who are dominated by Hanoi.

There is some evidence that the new line on Sihanouk is being peddled to Khmer Communist cadres in Cambodia. [redacted]

25X1

24 April 1973

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

[redacted]
[redacted] at the beginning of that month the regional military committee directed that propaganda should change to a pro-Sihanouk position. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

[redacted] the previous anti-Sihanouk attacks were counterproductive because they led the villagers to mistrust the Khmer Communists and to question their motives. When the propaganda switched to a positive tack on Sihanouk, it emphasized that he would be returning to Cambodia as an ordinary citizen, not as a prince.

The fact that the directive was issued by a regional committee suggests that the campaign to rehabilitate Sihanouk politically is probably a country-wide effort. In addition, its timing indicates that Hanoi and the Khmer Communist leadership had agreed to change their stance on Sihanouk well before his visit to Cambodia. [redacted]

25X1

[redacted]
25X1

24 April 1973

25X1

LAOSThe Government Prepares for the Political Struggle

The Lao Government in recent weeks has taken some preliminary steps to prepare for future political competition with the Communists. Prime Minister Souvanna has given a broad mandate to the newly created Committee for Pacification and National Development and has vested additional powers in the Defense Ministry. Both have drafted ambitious plans to train agents to combat Communist proselyting efforts in rural areas, to strengthen or re-establish local administrations, and to organize self-defense units.

The government's ability to organize an effective "pacification" program on such short notice is questionable, and efforts so far have gone little beyond the wishful thinking stage. Some trainees have been sent to South Vietnam, some propaganda material has been readied, and initial instructions have been sent to Lao Army commanders. As yet, however, no teams have moved into the field, and few Vientiane officials are likely to be enthusiastic about serving in the hinterlands.

The government may succeed in developing at least a rudimentary program in some rural areas if the national elections to seat a permanent coalition government are delayed for a year or two. In the meantime, principal responsibility for competing with the Communists in the political struggle will by default be left to the regional military commanders. In the past most of these commanders have shown little sensitivity or imagination in local political activities against the Communists.

25X1

25X1

24 April 1973

25X1

ANNEXLe Duan's Paramount Position in North Vietnam

An article published last fall by an obscure North Vietnamese historical journal rewrites an early period of party history in a way that gives Le Duan major credit for setting the broad guidelines for the last three decades of the party's struggle. Until the appearance of this work, official party histories had credited Ho Chi Minh and his then second-in-command, Truong Chinh, with guiding the party through World War II and the war against the French.

In North Vietnam, as in other Communist countries, the published treatment of the earlier historic roles of the leadership is a somewhat hagiographic exercise that provides important clues to the changing political standing of individual leaders. In this case, the treatment bolsters Le Duan's position as somewhat "more equal" than his fellows in the collective Politburo leadership that has ruled North Vietnam since Ho's death.

Inasmuch as Le Duan was in jail from 1940 to 1945, and thereafter for many years was stationed in southern Vietnam, away from the main arena of fighting in the North, rewriting history to give him a major role in guiding the Viet Minh required some bending of events. This has been done by playing up the importance of a hastily convened session of the Central Committee--its 6th Plenary Session--held in November 1939 near Saigon, and attended by Le Duan and a few other Central Committee members (now dead). Ho Chi Minh was still in China; Truong Chinh was in the North. Hanoi's new article asserts that the 6th Plenum set forth a party line emphasizing the importance of armed struggle which has had "especially important historical significance" and has governed the way the Vietnamese Communists have fought all their subsequent wars.

24 April 1973

Before this 1972 article, official party histories routinely gave credit to the "historic" 8th Plenary Session of the Central Committee, held in May 1941 near the Sino-Vietnamese border, for setting the party on its revolutionary course. It was in fact at this session that Ho Chi Minh (on Vietnamese soil for the first time in 30 years) assumed control of the party, assisted by his newly appointed secretary-general, Truong Chinh. Pre-1972 histories acknowledged that the 6th Plenum was important in developing party guidelines for fighting the war, but treated it as less significant than the 8th Plenum.

The 1972 article reversed the order of significance of the 8th and 6th Plenums, as the following passage shows:

We can say that at the 8th Plenum of the Lao Dong Party Central Committee in 1941, the task of carrying on an armed struggle to achieve national liberation was discussed in a complete, clear, and realistic way. But it was the 6th Plenum of the Central Committee which opened the way for the Vietnamese nation to take the path of armed struggle to advance to national liberation.

The article goes on to give the Resolution of the 6th Plenum specific credit for all military victories achieved since 1939. It asserts that by adhering to the "spirit" of the 6th Resolution, the Viet Minh won their great victory at Dien Bien Phu. In more recent years, according to the article, "Our people's warfare line (which originated from the line concerning armed struggle... pointed out at the 6th Plenum of the Central Committee) defeated all plans of aggression of the American imperialists."

Despite the broad sweep of its historical coverage--1939 to 1972--the 1972 article makes no mention of Ho Chi Minh by name, nor does it cite his writings, formerly a routine practice in articles of this type. In fact, the only leader living today who

24 April 1973

[REDACTED]

is mentioned in the article is Le Duan. This special treatment, plus the invidious description of the 8th Plenum, certainly reflects an attempt to increase Le Duan's prestige within the party at the expense of both Ho and Truong Chinh.

The last available pre-1972 treatment of this earlier period of history appeared in a two-volume work "The August Revolution (1945)," published by the prestigious Historical Research Department of the Central Committee in August 1970. That work described the 6th and 8th Plenums in standard, routine terms, indicating that even a year after Ho's death the Politburo had not begun a revision of official party history.

Thus far, the 1972 revision has not been popularized or circulated in the party's major journals, such as *Nhan Dan* and *Hoc Tap*. This could be the next step, although so far the treatment suggests some reticence and possibly some indecision by the politburo.

This present rewrite of party history is less authoritative than if it were a product of the Central Committee's Historical Research Department. Nevertheless, it is official, and adds to other signs that Le Duan's political stature with respect to his peers has been gradually enlarged since Ho Chi Minh's death.

[REDACTED]

25X1

24 April 1973